

The Affordable Care Act has now provided relief to high prescription drug costs for more than one million Medicare beneficiaries, according to U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced that more than one quarter of the four million checks that Medicare expects to distribute have now been received by eligible beneficiaries.

“Senior citizens and people with disabilities continue to benefit from the new law’s step-by-step approach to closing the Medicare ‘donut hole,’ ”Congresswoman Kaptur said.

Eligible beneficiaries receive a one-time, tax-free \$250 rebate check.

More beneficiaries will receive checks in the coming months as they enter the coverage gap, Congresswoman Kaptur said. Eligible beneficiaries get the checks automatically when they reach the “donut hole,” and need not sign up in order to receive the rebates. They are receiving these benefits because of the health care law Congress passed to strengthen Medicare, lower costs for seniors, and give seniors more control over their medical care.

“Congressional Republicans have voted to repeal this law and undercut Medicare by making it a voucher system,” Kaptur said. “We should focus on closing the donut hole once and for all and making Medicare stronger.”

Rebate checks will help people with their drug costs this year. Starting in January, those who fall into the donut hole will receive a 50 percent discount on covered brand name medications while in the donut hole. Every year, the amount Medicare beneficiaries pay in cost sharing will decrease significantly until the coverage gap is closed.

The law also provides new benefits to Medicare beneficiaries, including free preventive care services such as mammograms and certain colon cancer tests and a free annual physical starting in 2011 in Original Medicare. Additionally, seniors can expect to save on average

almost \$200 per year in premiums by 2018 compared to what they would have paid without the new law. Most beneficiaries will also see a significant reduction in their Medicare coinsurance as a result of the Affordable Care Act.

The Affordable Care Act also contains important new tools to help crack down on criminals seeking to scam seniors and steal taxpayer dollars. HHS and the Department of Justice are collaborating on fraud prevention by bringing together law enforcement experts, providers and seniors to help utilize these new tools to fight fraud and protect seniors.

The Affordable Care Act strengthens the screenings for health care providers who want to participate in Medicaid or Medicare, enables enforcement officials to see health care claims data from around the country into a single, searchable database, and strengthens the penalties for criminals. The reduction in waste, fraud and abuse returns savings to the Medicare Trust Fund to strengthen the program into the future.

Seniors are encouraged to contact 1-800-MEDICARE to report any solicitations of personal information, or go to [www.stopmedicarefraud.gov](http://www.stopmedicarefraud.gov).